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## OLR Bill Analysis

### SB 929

#### ***AN ACT EXPANDING SCHOOL MEAL PROGRAMS TO PROVIDE FREE SCHOOL MEALS TO ALL STUDENTS.***

#### **SUMMARY**

This bill requires local and regional boards of education to (1) establish and operate a school lunch program and (2) provide lunch meals free of cost to all students regardless of economic status. For school boards that choose to operate breakfast and other child feeding programs as allowed under current law, the bill requires them to be free to all students.

The bill also makes corresponding changes by eliminating provisions it makes obsolete, such as the provision that requires school boards to have a policy to prohibit employees and third-party vendors from identifying and shaming kids for unpaid lunch charges.

The bill also requires the State Board of Education (SBE) to annually provide grants, at least equal to what it is authorized to spend under current law, to local and regional boards of education; the Technical Education and Career System; and the governing authority of a state charter school, interdistrict magnet school, or endowed academy that participates in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and operates a school lunch, breakfast, or other child feeding program. Current law authorizes SBE to spend these amounts within available appropriations.

The bill also makes technical and conforming changes.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2023

#### **LUNCH, BREAKFAST, AND OTHER CHILD FEEDING PROGRAMS**

##### ***Programs***

Current law allows local and regional boards of education to

establish and operate a lunch program for public school children as provided under federal law. The bill requires, rather than allows, them to do so.

Under the law, unchanged by the bill, a school board may (1) operate lunch services for its employees, (2) establish and operate a school breakfast program, as provided under federal law, or (3) establish and operate other child feeding programs it finds necessary.

### ***Charge***

Under current law, school boards that operate lunch, breakfast, or other child feeding programs (1) are prohibited from charging more than the cost of food, wages, and other expenses directly had in providing these services and (2) must provide the meals free of charge only to children who meet the federal economic needs standard. Instead, under the bill school boards operating any of these programs must provide these meals free of charge to all students regardless of economic status.

### ***Gifts, Donations, or Grants***

Current law allows local or regional boards of education to accept gifts, donations, or grants from any public or private source to pay off unpaid student meal charges. The bill allows the boards to use these funds to provide free meals to students instead.

### ***Obsolete Provisions***

The bill eliminates provisions that it makes obsolete, such as the requirement that school boards, in any policy or procedure for employees and third-party vendors collecting unpaid charges, include a (1) prohibition on identifying or shaming a child for unpaid meal charges and (2) requirement for procedures to communicate with parents or guardians about collecting a child's unpaid meal charges.

## **STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION GRANTS**

Current law authorizes SBE, within available appropriations, to expend in each fiscal year an amount equal to (1) the money required under the federal matching requirements, which it must disburse in

accordance with federal law and (2) 10 cents per lunch served in the prior school year, following federal law, by the local and regional boards of education; the Technical Education and Career System; and the governing authority of a state charter school, interdistrict magnet school, or endowed academy that participates in the NSLP and operates a school lunch, breakfast, or other child feeding program. Instead, the bill requires SBE to provide at least these amounts as annual grants to each of these boards, systems, and governing authorities, who must certify that State Department of Education (SDE) standards were met.

**BACKGROUND**

***Related Act***

PA 23-1, § 1, adjusts the federal American Rescue Plan Act funding allocations for FY 23 by reducing the allocation to the Office of Policy and Management for Invest Connecticut by \$60 million and reallocating these funds to SDE for free school meals for students, increasing the current allocation to SDE from \$30 million to \$90 million.

**COMMITTEE ACTION**

Committee on Children

Joint Favorable

Yea 14    Nay 5    (02/28/2023)